

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON GREENLAND OF TODAY

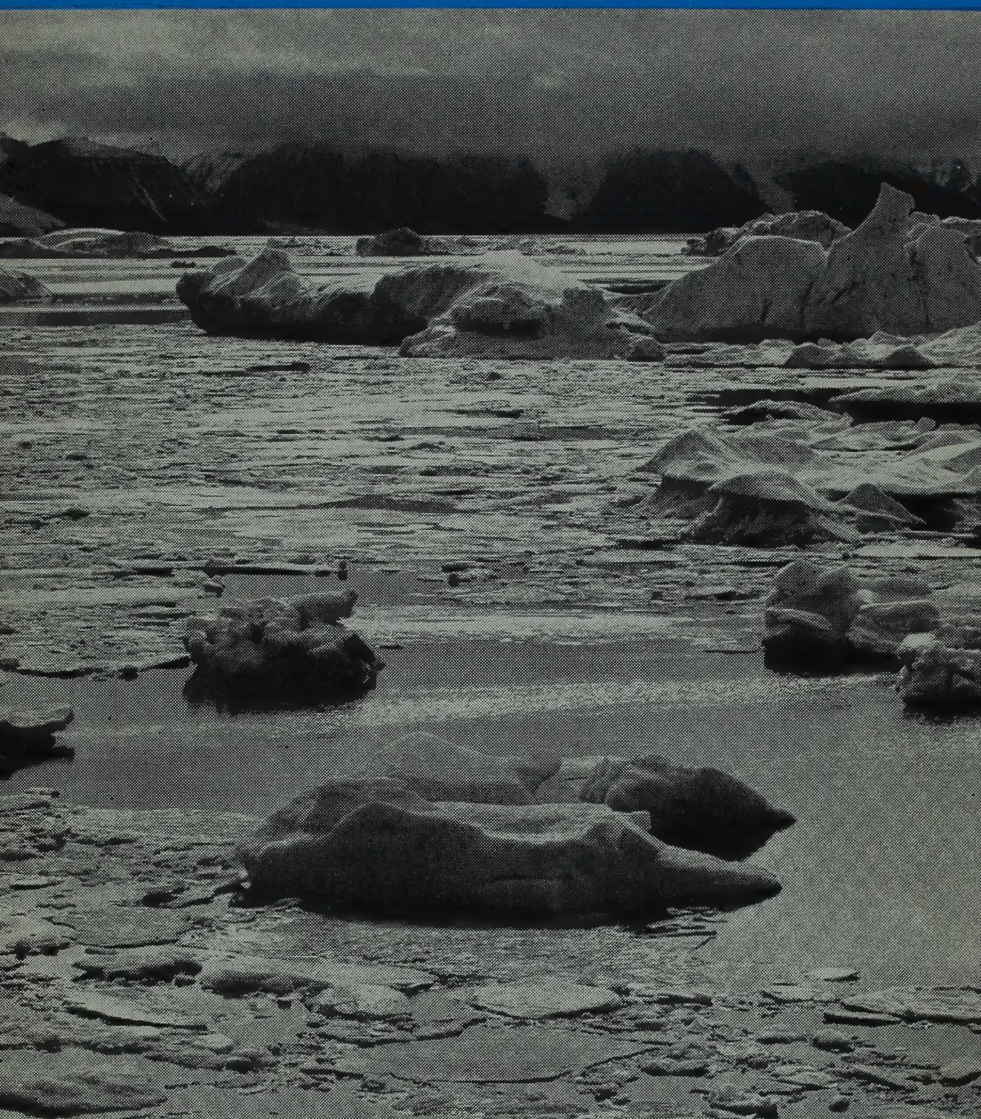


Photo : W. Lüthy, Bern

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*During the last decade there has been a growing interest in Greenland and in the revolutionary development that is taking place within the Greenland community. Up-to-date factual information and pictures have not always been available, and it is hoped, therefore, that this little folder will help to give an impression of modern Greenland.*

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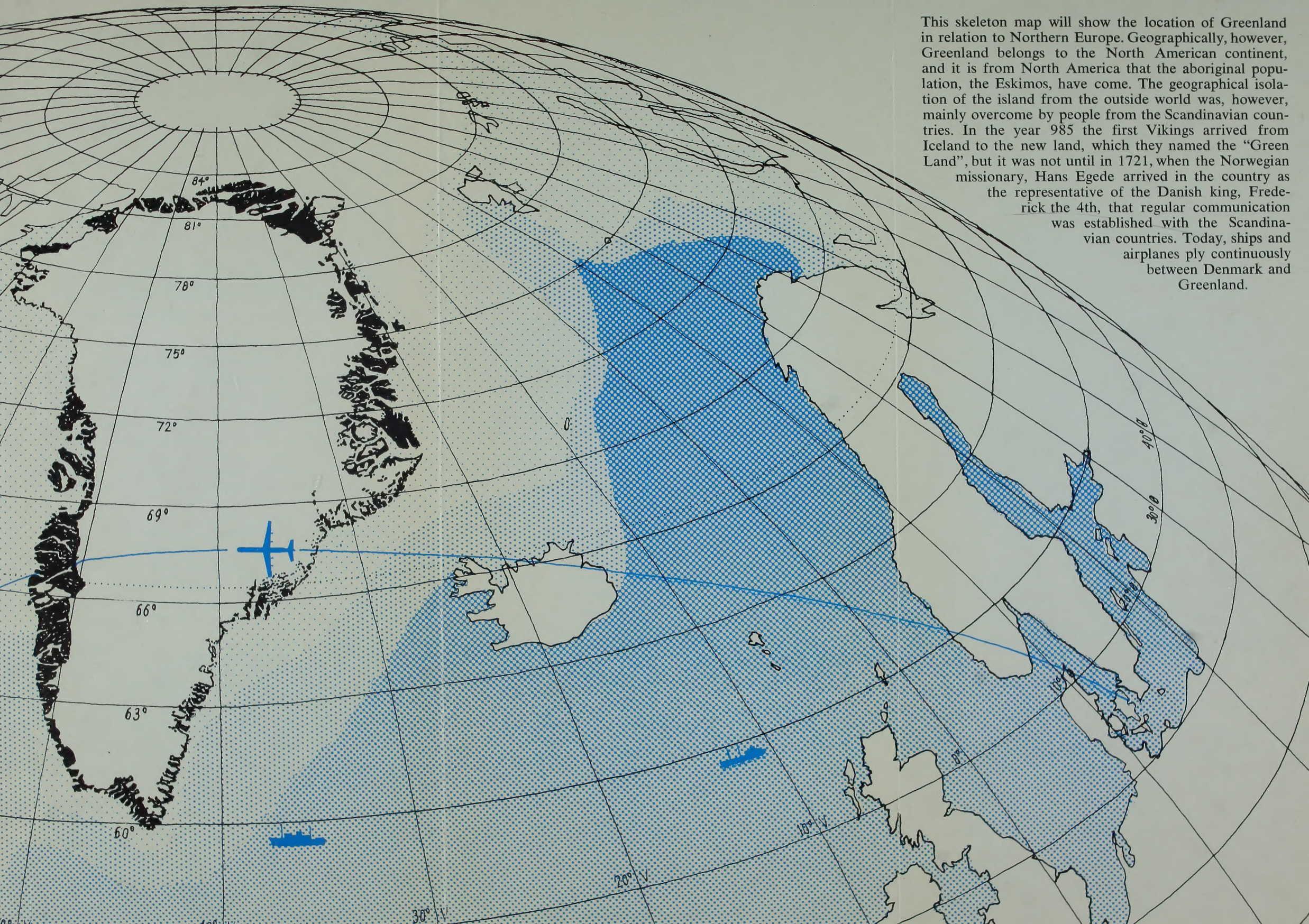
Mr. Ebbesen

POLARPAM

THE MINISTRY FOR GREENLAND 1967



This skeleton map will show the location of Greenland in relation to Northern Europe. Geographically, however, Greenland belongs to the North American continent, and it is from North America that the aboriginal population, the Eskimos, have come. The geographical isolation of the island from the outside world was, however, mainly overcome by people from the Scandinavian countries. In the year 985 the first Vikings arrived from Iceland to the new land, which they named the "Green Land", but it was not until in 1721, when the Norwegian missionary, Hans Egede arrived in the country as the representative of the Danish king, Frederick the 4th, that regular communication was established with the Scandinavian countries. Today, ships and airplanes ply continuously between Denmark and Greenland.







Formerly, the Greenlanders lived in small houses, generally built by themselves. Now GTO is building many different types of standard houses and - as here in Godthåb - also large apartment buildings.

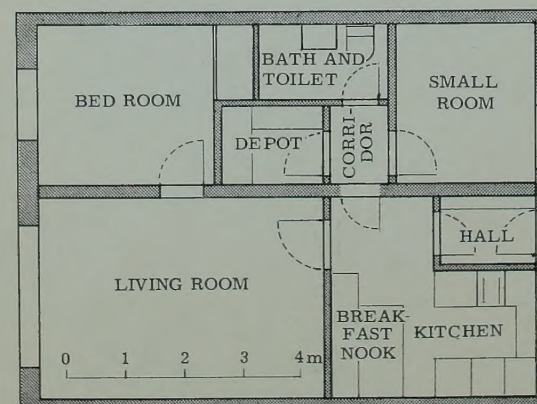
Until 1953 Greenland was a Danish colony, but from that year the Danish Constitution was amended so as also to include Denmark. Irrespective of the fact that Greenland was thus given the same legal status as the rest of Denmark, its geographic location, its climate and its trade will naturally, in many respects, create considerable differences in the standard of living when comparing Greenland with the other Danish provinces. During the period following the Second World War every effort has, however, been made by the Danish state to improve the standard of living in Greenland.

And there was plenty of work to be done. Specialists were sent to Greenland to fight tuberculosis, develop the health service, build schools and arrange for a better education, construct fish-canneries and teach the Greenlanders to fish from motorboats, build new stores, extend the facilities for more and better supplies, etc.

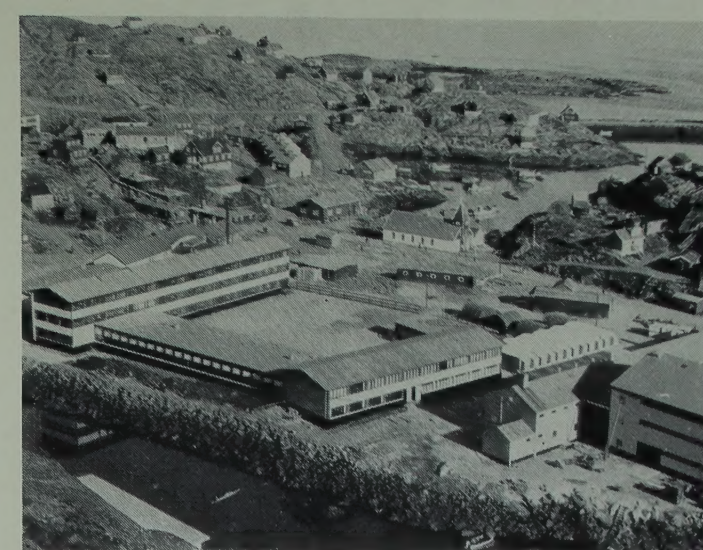
This was no easy task. Many difficulties never met with in Denmark were encountered when the Danish specialists were faced with the severe arctic climate, the difficult language and the enormous distances. In spite of these problems, however, the towns had, within the

next ten years, been developed to the extent where the Greenlanders may be said to enjoy the same opportunities as the citizens in any modern society.

All the children attend school for at least 7 years. After that, they may continue through classes 8, 9 and 10 of the modern school or they may be promoted to grammar school (the so-called "realskole"). The leaving exam from Form III of this latter school is equivalent to the



Floor Plan of flat in one of the apartment houses at Godthåb. There are various types of flats in each apartment house, all with running water and central heating.

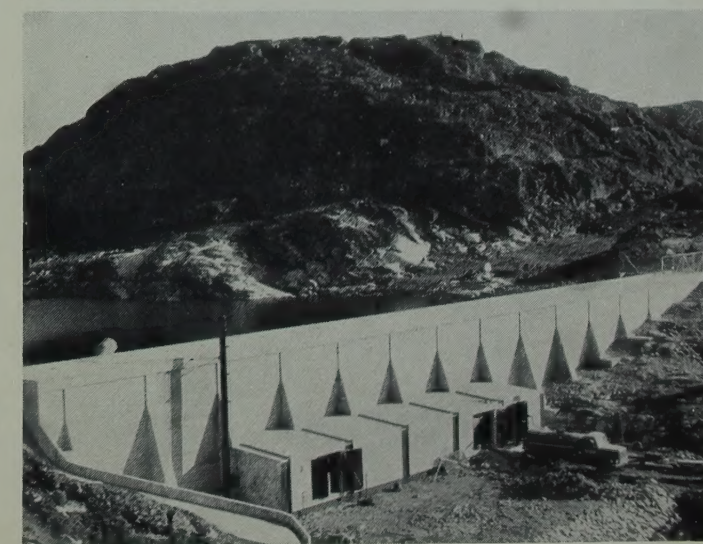


The school at Sukkertoppen is one of Greenland's most modern schools.

Danish "realeksamen". The pupils are taught in Danish, but in the first two forms of grammar school the Greenlandic language is included on the curriculum as a separate subject. Every town has a school, and also most of the outposts. The construction of all these schools has been entrusted to the Greenland Technical Organization (GTO) - a statesupported construction firm of uncommon scope. This firm has been responsible for the main bulk of construction work in Greenland this past decade, including all the new hospitals, factories, warehouses, waterworks, wharfs, etc.

The Royal Greenland Trade Department, which has been operating in Greenland since 1774, has built up a completely modern supply service. The Greenlanders can now buy all commodities needed by modern man. The Royal Greenland Trade has, moreover, been instru-

By the larger settlements, lakes are being diked in order to provide for waterworks. Special water-trucks bring the water around to those houses which have no running water as yet.







The Royal Greenland Trade stores are just as up-to-date as the stores in other parts of Denmark.

mental in the development of a modern fishing industry. Before 1953, fishing boats were few, small and far between, while now they include craft of up to 200 tons. The catch is being processed in the factories on land and exported as salt, frozen or dried fish to Europe, Africa, Asia or America. A large proportion of the Greenland export revenue stems from the fishing industry.

In spite of the tremendous industrial development that has been witnessed in Greenland during the last decade, the old Greenlandic hunting traditions have, however, been maintained to a large extent. In the northern part of West Greenland, in North Greenland and on the east coast seal, walrus and whale hunting is still the main occupation. The rifle has been taken into use as an important hunting weapon, but modern boats and guns

The Greenlanders, however, can also buy fish and fowl fresh from the sea, as here in the town of Julianehåb.



The harbour of Holsteinsborg is one of the lively centres of modern fishing.

have not proven capable of entirely superseding the kayaks and harpoons of old, which are being used to this very day.

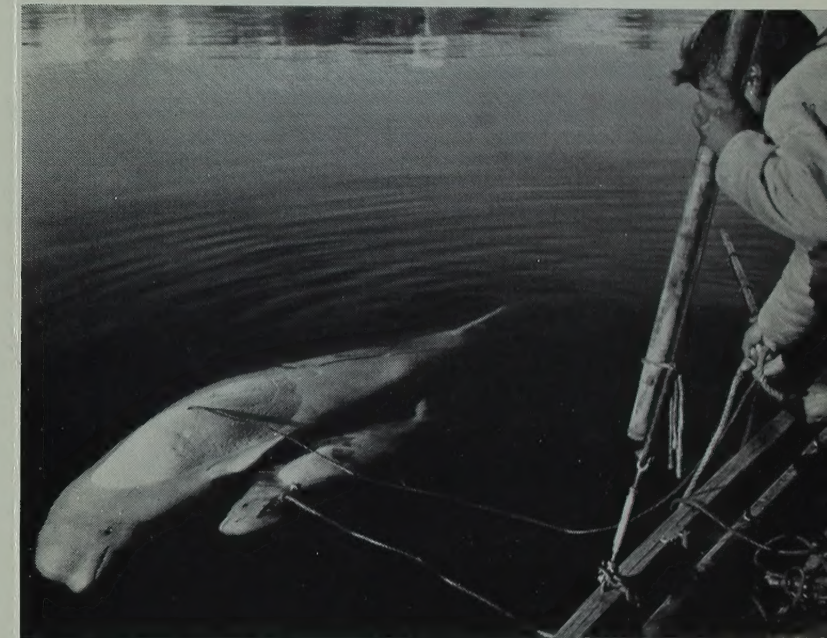
Modern technique has meant a tremendous development within the community of Greenland. Life has become easier and more pleasant, but even the most advanced modern technique is frustrated when matched against the onslaughts of the arctic climate. Once the polar darkness, the storms and the cold ravage the northern districts, only the ancient means of transportation, the dogsled and the kayak, prove capable of keeping up communication between the outposts and settlements; here, thousands of years of native skill proves superior to modern techniques in facing the hard living conditions in arctic Greenland. — Thus, in modern Greenland old and new cultures meet.

There is a large catch of codfish. Here they are being cleaned and sliced in the factories before being frozen for export.



In the northern and eastern parts, the Greenlanders still hunt seal and walrus from their slender kayaks. Though the rifle is now the most important weapon, the harpoon still proves indispensable. (Photo: W. Lüthy, Bern).

The prey easily sinks if not kept up by the bladder-float attached to the harpoon. Here, some Thule hunters have harpooned a mother beluga whale with its young one. (Photo: W. Lüthy, Bern).



Even in the remotest parts of Thule modern fishing boats are now to be found. (Photo: W. Lüthy, Bern).





# IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT GREENLAND

**Area:** Greenland is the biggest island of the world, 840,000 square miles, i.e. more than eight times the size of the United Kingdom and more than three times the size of a state as e.g. Texas.

**The Ice-Cap:** More than 700,000 square miles are covered by an ice-cap up to two miles thick. This makes 92 percent of Greenland uninhabitable.

**The Open Land:** People live on the coast or on the islands just off the coast. A little more than 135,000 square miles are free from ice, but most of this land is too mountainous to be fit for human habitation.

**Highest Mountain** is Mt. Gunnbjorn on the east coast, 11,200 ft.

**Climate:** The so-called East-Greenlandic arctic current brings great masses of ice with it from the Polar Basin down along the coast and around the southern tip. This cools off the coast and effects a temperate arctic climate. Temperatures in the summer range from 68° F. in the south to about 40° in the north. In winter-time it rarely gets colder than 5 below in the south, whereas in the north, temperatures may descend to 40 below.

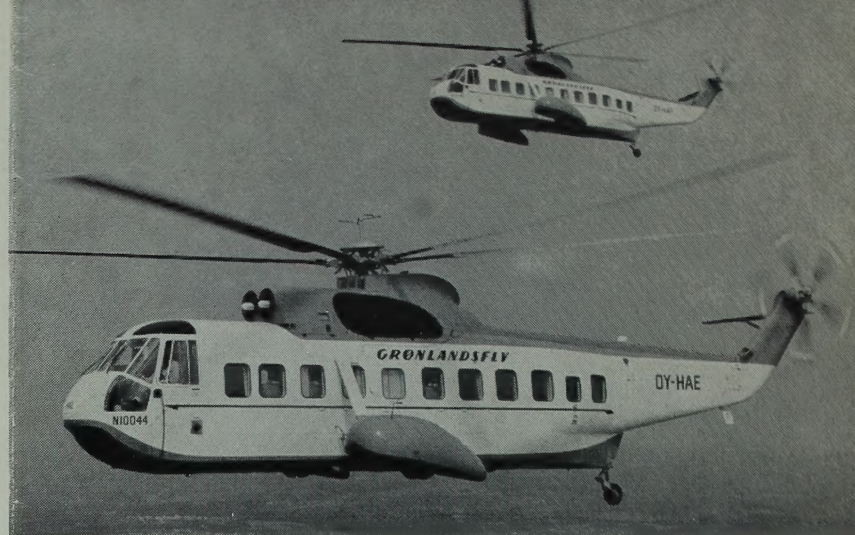
**Vegetation is sparse;** on most of the open land you find various sorts of grass, moss and heather. At the south tip of the country there are woods of 6 to 9 feet willow and also some birch trees.

**Animal Life:** On land, caribou, musk ox, polar bear, blue and white fox and snow rabbit. In the sea: whale, walrus and seal are hunted by the Greenlanders, especially in the northern and the eastern part of the country. Fowl are abundant: on land: eagles, white owls, falcons, ptarmigans and sparrows. Along the coast: eider-ducks, mallards, loons, geese and many different types of gulls. Some of the sea-birds have their nesting sites on the cliffs.

**Population:** The Greenlanders descend partly from the Eskimos, partly from Europeans. In 1965, about 40,000 people were living in Greenland, about 4,000 of whom were born outside Greenland.

**Distribution of Population:** The population is spread over settlements, outposts and towns. In 1965 there were 125 habitation groups, 112 of which were to be found on the west coast. Godthåb is the largest town, with a population of 5,150 at the end of 1965.

**Municipalities:** Greenland is divided into 18 municipalities, 15 of which are on the west coast, 1 in the north (Thule) and 2 on the east coast.



On the west coast, helicopters will carry you from town to town.

**Provincial Council:** The supreme consultative assembly is the Provincial Council, which meets every year at Godthåb. The total membership is 17, all democratically elected native representatives. In addition, two native Greenlanders are members of the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen.

**Religion:** The native population all belong to the Danish Lutheran State Church.

**Imports:** In 1966 the Royal Greenland Trade Department sold about 26 million dollars worth of goods from its stores and main depots. About 3,900 different types of commodities were available in the stores.

**Exports:** That same year the Royal Greenland Trade Department exported about 8.3 mill. dollars worth of Greenlandic goods; of these, about 6.7 mill. dollars worth of goods were exported to foreign countries.

But in the severe part of the winter, the dogsled is still being extensively used. (Photo: W. Lüthy, Bern).

